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**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CELEBRITY BRANDS:  
A CASE STUDY OF RARE BEAUTY'S VALUE PROPOSITION,  
MISSION, AND VISION**

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## INDEX

INTRODUCTION .....	3
Chapter One: Literature Review .....	5
1.1 Definition of brand .....	5
1.2 Understanding Celebrity Brands.....	6
1.2.1 History and Evolution of Celebrity Brands.....	8
1.2.2 Advantages and Limitations of Celebrity Brands .....	9
1.3 Definition of Value Proposition .....	11
1.2.1 Value Proposition in Celebrity Branding .....	12
1.3 Definition of Mission and Vision Statements .....	13
1.3.1 Mission and Vision Statements in Celebrity Branding .....	14
Chapter Two: Case Study of Rare Beauty.....	16
2.1 Introduction to Rare Beauty .....	16
2.1.1 Brand Founder: Selena Gomez.....	17
2.1.2 History of the Firm.....	18
2.2 Rare Beauty's Value Proposition: What Makes Rare Beauty Different?.....	19
2.2.1 Rare Impact Fund.....	20
2.3 Rare Beauty's Mission and Vision: Breaking and Redefining Beauty Standards .....	21
2.4 Strategic Insights from Rare Beauty's Branding Approach.....	22
Chapter Three: A Comparative Analysis of Celebrity Brands.....	25
3.1 Comparison of Rare Beauty with Other Celebrity Brands .....	25
3.1.1 Rare Beauty vs. Fenty Beauty by Rihanna .....	25
3.1.2 Rare Beauty vs. Rhode by Hailey Bieber.....	27
3.1.3 Rare Beauty vs. Chiara Ferragni Brand by Chiara Ferragni .....	29
3.2 Results and Findings.....	32
3.2.1 Strategic reflections .....	33
CONCLUSION .....	38
REFERENCES.....	40

## INTRODUCTION

In a world dominated by social media, the landscape of celebrity brands has evolved from traditional endorsements to celebrities launching and actively managing their own branded products. As a direct channel to fans, digital platforms have not only transformed influence but also allowed celebrities to share personal stories that resonate authentically with their followers. These narratives often extend into the brands they build, impregnating products with the celebrities' personal values, ethos, and style. This thesis aims to explore the intricate relationship between celebrity-owned brands and consumer engagement, highlighting the fundamental role of authenticity, inclusivity, and social responsibility in creating a brand that resonates with contemporary audiences.

The protagonist of this exploration is Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez, a company that embodies the successful integration of personal values and social missions into its business model. Launched with a clear commitment to mental health advocacy and self-acceptance, Rare Beauty challenges traditional beauty standards and promotes a more inclusive and empathetic approach to cosmetics.

The first section of this thesis will mainly focus on the notional literature and academic definitions of branding, value proposition, mission and vision statements. It will trace the history and evolution of celebrity brands from simple endorsements to true engagements, highlighting how social media was the reason for this transformation and the implications of these changes for celebrity involvement.

Focusing on Rare Beauty, the second chapter will investigate into the strategies used by the brand to leverage Selena Gomez's influence and advocacy for mental health. It will examine the brand's value proposition, mission and vision statements, and community engagement initiatives that highlight inclusivity and mental wellness.

The third section will compare Rare Beauty with other celebrity brands such as Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, Rhode by Hailey Bieber, and the Chiara Ferragni's Brand. It will explore how different branding strategies align with the personal values of the celebrity founders and how these strategies resonate with target demographics.

By dissecting the components of successful celebrity brands, this thesis aims to provide an understanding of the celebrity brand phenomenon in the digital age. Its purpose is to consider the potential survival of such brands independent of their celebrity founders, exploring how deeply the success of these companies is intertwined with the personal branding of their celebrity owners.

It will also offer strategic reflections on maintaining brand integrity and consumer loyalty in an industry that is as uncertain as it is glamorous. This thesis will provide practical insights for brand managers and marketers aiming to navigate the complex landscape of celebrity branding.

## Chapter One: Literature Review

### 1.1 Definition of brand

Understanding the concept of the word brand is a complex phenomenon. While it might initially seem simple, it's quite intricate; no single definition has completely captured the full meaning of the term<sup>1</sup>. Although brands have been widely discussed and debated in the academic world, a common understanding of brands could not be made among the experts. “Each expert comes up with his or her own definition of brand or nuances of definition”<sup>2</sup>, which increases the complexity in the interpretation of the word as well as its management. Thus, it is crucial to grasp the essence of branding to effectively create, develop, and protect both brands and businesses at large.

According to David Aaker, a brand is a “*distinguishing name or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors*”<sup>3</sup>. This definition interprets the brand as a mean to create distinctiveness in the marketplace, helping consumers distinguish one company's products or services from another's. Aaker emphasizes how important it is for a brand to build a sustainable competitive advantage and to also establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers.<sup>4</sup>

The American Marketing Association’s recent definition of a brand is “*A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies the seller’s good or services as distinct from those of other sellers*”<sup>5</sup>. In other words, brands are developed in order to distinguish a company from its current and future competitors. In fact, the definition includes numerous traditional brand characteristics, that are crucial to help consumers identify and remember the brand, differentiate it from competitors, and associate certain values or qualities with it. It emphasizes the importance of a brand to have a distinctive identity, highlighting how fundamental it is to stand

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<sup>1</sup> Maurya, U. K., & Mishra, P. (2012). “What is a brand? A perspective on brand meaning”. European Journal of Business and Management.

<sup>2</sup> Kapferer, J. N. (2004). “The new strategic brand management: Creating and sustaining brand equity long term.” London: Kogan Page.

<sup>3</sup> Aaker, D.A. (1991). “Managing brand equity: Capitalizing on the value of a brand name.” New York: Free Press.

<sup>4</sup> Id

<sup>5</sup> Definition of Brand by American Marketing Association (AMA) <https://www.ama.org/topics/branding/>

out in a crowded market. When consumers have the possibility to choose between different options, brands play a significant role in influencing their decisions.

Effective brands make customers easily recall a company's products. Such a brand reaches out to consumers' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, creating vivid mental images that quickly form deep connections with individuals. This immediate and powerful link between brands and customers is crucial to intensify brand recognition, foster loyalty, and shape consumer decision-making.<sup>6</sup>

Brands aim to evoke a positive bond with consumers through higher engagement, which can further enhance experiential value. The significance of a brand extends beyond simply signaling the quality of a product or service; it also represents the intrinsic value that consumers assign to themselves, thus reflecting a complex aspect of consumer identity and value.<sup>7</sup> Consumers often are more willing to pay premium prices for specific brands, because they believe they are better suited to their preferences and more effective at meeting their needs compared to the competition.<sup>8</sup> How a brand resonates with consumers' psychological needs and personal significance can reveal a lot about their identities. A powerful and valuable brand is one where the name speaks for itself and is associated with a good reputation and quality products.

## 1.2 Understanding Celebrity Brands

Celebrity-owned brands profit from the popularity and influence of their well-known founders to promote products and services. These brands typically enjoy an advantage in market visibility thanks to the celebrity's existing fanbase and consistent publicity in the media, which often leads to reduced marketing expenses and quick brand establishment.<sup>9</sup> The link between the celebrity's public persona and their brand infuses the brand with appealing qualities such as luxury, dependability, or modernity, mirroring the celebrity's public image.

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, A. C. T., Stavros, C., & Westberg, K. (2017). "Pitch partners: Customers as players and collaborators." In A. C. T. Smith, C. Stavros, & K. Westberg (Eds.), "Brand fans: Lessons from the world's greatest sporting brands." Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> Id

<sup>8</sup> Hollis, N. (2014). "Brand premium: How smart brands make more money." Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>9</sup> Agrawal, J., & Kamakura, W. (1995). "Celebrity endorsement and its impact on sales: A research analysis carried out in India". Journal of Marketing.

Defined in the academic literature as brands that draw significant advantages from the celebrity's public persona and image<sup>10</sup> celebrity brands utilize the personal narratives, values, and public perceptions of the celebrity to create a deeper connection with consumers<sup>11</sup>. This connection is not merely superficial; it taps into the celebrity's story, lifestyle, and public stances, making the brand an extension of the celebrity's own identity.<sup>12</sup>

Such brands operate at the intersection of commerce and celebrity culture, where the authenticity and relatability of the celebrity play critical roles. When a celebrity is seen as genuinely invested in the products or causes, they endorse, this ensures greater trust and loyalty from its consumers. However, the success of such brands also depends on the celebrity's ability to maintain a positive public image; any negative publicity can directly impact the brand's reputation and consumer perception.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the effectiveness of celebrity brands often relies on the strategic alignment between the celebrity's image and the brand's identity<sup>14</sup>. When there is a clear and cohesive match, the brand benefits from an elevated sense of integrity and coherence that can attract a more engaged and loyal customer base<sup>15</sup>. Thus, the making of a celebrity brand is a risky attempt that requires careful consideration of how a celebrity's persona is projected and seen in the public sphere.

In other words, celebrity-owned brands represent a unique fusion of personal branding and commercial strategy, where the celebrity's life and image become significant components of the brand's story and appeal. These brands not only influence the celebrity's fame for initial market penetration but also strive to embody the qualities that fans admire in the celebrity, thereby encouraging a stronger and more personal connection with the audience.

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<sup>10</sup> Hollensen, S., & Schimmelpfennig, C. (2013). "The performance of celebrity endorsements: A meta-analysis." *Journal of International Business Research*.

<sup>11</sup> Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). "Celebrity endorsement: A literature review." *Journal of Marketing Management*.

<sup>12</sup> Amos, C., Holmes, G., & Strutton, D. (2008). "The effectiveness of celebrity endorsements: A meta-analysis." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*.

<sup>13</sup> Khatri, P. (2006). "Celebrity endorsement – A strategic promotion perspective." *Indian Journal of Marketing*.

<sup>14</sup> Keller, K. L. (2008). "Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity (3rd ed.)." Pearson/Prentice Hall.

<sup>15</sup> Id

### 1.2.1 History and Evolution of Celebrity Brands

The idea of celebrity branding has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, celebrities primarily served as representatives for products, using their image and notoriety to boost sales for established brands. This practice dates back to the early 20th century when figures from various entertainment sectors, like film, sports, and music, started endorsing products<sup>16</sup>. One of the earliest instances occurred in the 1920s when silent film stars were used to promote items like cigarettes and beauty products<sup>17</sup>. Over time, as media and advertising evolved, so did the nature of celebrity endorsements, with the late 20th century seeing figures like Michael Jordan and Cindy Crawford become iconic faces for brands such as Nike and Pepsi.<sup>18</sup>

The arrival of social media at the turn of the 21st century denoted a significant change in celebrity branding<sup>19</sup>. Celebrities acquired direct access to their fan bases, which permitted them to form more personal connections and launch their own brands rather than simply endorsing others'.<sup>20</sup> This era has seen celebrities take greater control over their brand narratives and value propositions, adjusting them with their personal ethos and lifestyle rather than with external products. They have become deeply involved in the creative process, often collaborating on special product lines before establishing their own brands.

Historically, notable figures used to endorse products merely by their appearance in advertisements.<sup>21</sup> However, over the decades, this evolved into more complex relationships, blurring the lines between personal endorsement and brand promotion, leading to modern partnerships that generate significant revenue, such as Nike's collaboration with Michael Jordan.<sup>22</sup>

Today, the strategy around celebrity branding involves consideration of the celebrity's public persona, the authenticity of their connection to the brand, and the strategic fit between their image and the product. This approach requires careful planning and long-term thinking,

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<sup>16</sup> Sternheimer, K. (2011). "Celebrity culture and the American dream". New York: Routledge.

<sup>17</sup> Id

<sup>18</sup> LaFeber, W. (2002). "Michael Jordan and the new global capitalism." W.W. Norton & Company.

<sup>19</sup> Burns, K. S. (2009). "Celebrity 2.0: The social media revolution." Peter Lang.

<sup>20</sup> Id

<sup>21</sup> Yakob, F. (2010). "A short history of celebrity selling". Admap.

<sup>22</sup> Id



demonstrated by enduring campaigns like those featuring Gary Lineker for Walkers<sup>23</sup>, which lasted over a quarter of a century.

The contemporary landscape of celebrity branding is characterized by deeper integration between celebrities and brands, moving beyond traditional endorsements to roles like creative directors, as seen with Justin Timberlake for Bud Light Platinum and Kate Moss for Diet Coke<sup>24</sup>. These roles, while often symbolic, signify a deeper commitment to the brand, enhancing credibility and consistency in the brand's messaging.

### 1.2.2 Advantages and Limitations of Celebrity Brands

Celebrity brands come with a unique set of advantages and limitations that impact their market performance. On the positive side, these brands often enjoy increased visibility because of their celebrity's existing audience, which can lead to higher brand recognition and quicker customer acquisition. The trust and loyalty that fans have for the celebrity can readily transfer to the brand, providing a strong initial customer base.<sup>25</sup> In addition, celebrities hold significant influence over trends, particularly in industries like fashion and beauty, which can be advantageous for the brands related to them.

However, there are remarkable disadvantages to consider. The reputation of a celebrity brand is closely attached to the celebrity's public image, making the brand powerless against any negative publicity or personal scandals involving the celebrity.<sup>26</sup> This dependency can pose a high risk to the brand's image and sustainability. Additionally, the excitement of celebrity involvement may wear off over time, making it challenging to sustain consumer interest as market dynamics and consumer preferences evolve. One more concern is the perceived genuineness of the celebrity's involvement; consumers may be skeptical about the authenticity of the celebrity's commitment to product development, potentially undermining the brand's

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<sup>23</sup> See supra note 21

<sup>24</sup> Id

<sup>25</sup> Elberse, A., & Verleun, J. (2012). "The economics of celebrity endorsements". *Journal of Advertising Research*.

<sup>26</sup> Id

credibility.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the financial cost of maintaining a celebrity brand can be significant, and if the brand fails to meet expectations, it could lead to substantial financial losses.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, celebrity brands attract significant attention, which can be both beneficial and detrimental. Having a celebrity's name attached can draw a large audience, yet incredulity could emerge, especially if the celebrity is controversial. For instance, Kim Kardashian has both a vast following and numerous detractors, making any brand she embraces vulnerable to public scrutiny and potential backfire.

To give another example, Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop has been successful financially but has faced criticism for promoting unproven health practices<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, Miranda Kerr's Kora Organics has faced issues with product quality. Tom Brady's brand, Brady, has been criticized for being overpriced with limited appeal, and Jessica Alba's The Honest Company has faced lawsuits over product quality and transparency. Moreover, celebrity brands risk association with any personal scandals or legal issues involving the celebrity. For instance, Kanye West's partnership deals, including his Yeezy line with Adidas, were largely terminated after his public engagement in racist and anti-Semitic remarks.<sup>30</sup>

When celebrities are mere endorsers rather than owners, it's easier for brands to cut ties and recover from scandals. For instance, many brands distanced themselves from Tiger Woods after his 2009 scandal but later reconnected as the controversy faded<sup>31</sup>. Research shows that brands distancing themselves quickly from endorsers post-scandal tend to fare better in share performance. However, when celebrities deeply embed themselves in a brand's personality, distancing becomes challenging and can pose significant risks.

Thus, while celebrity brands can give a powerful platform for product promotion and consumer engagement, they also require caution management to mitigate the associated risks and ensure long-term achievement.

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<sup>27</sup> Erdogan, B. Z., Baker, M. J., & Tagg, S. (2001). "Celebrity endorsements and their impact on brand image." *International Journal of Advertising*.

<sup>28</sup> Till, B. D., Stanley, S. M., & Priluck, R. (2008). "Celebrity endorsements: Do they really enhance brand equity?" *Journal of Advertising Research*.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, A. (2018). "The Big Business of Gwyneth Paltrow's Wellness Empire." *The New York Times Magazine*.

<sup>30</sup> BBC News. (2022). "Adidas cuts ties with rapper Kanye West over anti-Semitism".

<sup>31</sup> Id

### 1.3 Definition of Value Proposition

The concept of a value proposition is key to both the comprehension and operation of successful business models. A value proposition is a concise statement that articulates the unique benefits and value a company's product, or service offers to its target customers. It goes beyond a simple slogan or tagline, serving as a clear declaration of how the offering solves customer problems, fulfills specific needs, or improves their situation in a way that differentiates it from competitors. A powerful value proposition communicates the primary reason why a customer should pick a particular product or service, highlighting its distinctive features, advantages, and the value it delivers<sup>32</sup>. It should be easily understood, persuasive, and resonate with the target audience's needs and pain points<sup>33</sup>. A well-crafted value proposition acts as a powerful marketing tool, helping to position the company in the market, attract customers, and drive sales by clearly demonstrating the unique value the offering brings to its intended clients<sup>34</sup>.

João M. S. Carvalho and Jan Jonker argue that a value proposition should be viewed not only as an economic promise but also as a social, environmental, and psychological commitment made to customers.<sup>35</sup> This balanced approach highlights the multifaceted nature of value propositions in the strategic approach used today, where success is measured not merely in economic terms but also through social impact and environmental responsibility. The authors state that a strong value proposition should integrate these diverse aspects to meet the increasingly complex consumer expectations and market landscapes.<sup>36</sup> For instance, economic values are derived from the product's ability to meet demands and provide utility, while social values might reflect the brand's role in community building or social change. Environmental values focus on the sustainability of business practices, and psychological values often address personal fulfillment or identity reinforcement through product usage.

This comprehensive framing of a value proposition is fundamental for businesses meaning to keep relevance and competitive advantage in dynamic markets<sup>37</sup>. It challenges businesses to

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<sup>32</sup> Definition of Value Proposition by TechTarget

<https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/value-proposition-VP>

<sup>33</sup> Definition of Value Proposition by the Corporate Finance Institute

<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/value-proposition/>

<sup>34</sup> Id

<sup>35</sup> Carvalho, J. M. S., & Jonker, J. (2015). "Creating a balanced value proposition: Exploring the Advanced Business Creation Model (ABCM)". In *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*.

<sup>36</sup> Id

<sup>37</sup> Slater, S. F. (1996). "The challenge of sustaining a competitive advantage." *Industrial Marketing Management*.

innovate continually around how they create and communicate the value of their products and services, ensuring alignment with broader social, economic, and environmental goals.

### 1.2.1 Value Proposition in Celebrity Branding

The value proposition in celebrity-owned brands presents a unique cooperation between the celebrity's public image and the brand's market appeal. These brands influence the personal attributes of celebrities, like their authenticity, social advocacy, and relatability, to forge a deep connection with consumers<sup>38</sup>. Rather than relying solely on the celebrity's fame, these brands enhance the customer's experience by adjusting the product to the celebrity's very own story, values, and lifestyle. This goes beyond mere endorsement; it incorporates the celebrity's persona into the texture of the brand, offering unique advantages such as exclusive designs or commitments to specific social causes that are not typically available with non-celebrity brands.<sup>39</sup>

For example, Fenty Beauty by Rihanna uses its association with its owner to emphasize inclusivity and diversity in its product range<sup>40</sup>, which has resonated effectively across a diverse consumer base. Similarly, Kylie Cosmetics takes advantage of Kylie Jenner's massive social media influence and her connection with younger audiences to market products that echo her personal style and beauty standards<sup>41</sup>. These strategies guarantee that the value proposition of these celebrity brands is clear: they offer a special blend of personal touch, exclusivity, and social relevance that appeals to the celebrity's fans and broad market segments alike. This approach not only differentiates them from competitors but also improves their attractiveness by promising consumers a unique and aspirational experience that is closely aligned with the admired attributes of the celebrity involved.

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<sup>38</sup> Thomson, M. (2006). "Human brands: Investigating antecedents to consumers' strong attachments to celebrities." *Journal of Marketing*.

<sup>39</sup> Sternheimer, K. (2011). "Celebrity culture and the American dream: Stardom and social mobility." Routledge.

<sup>40</sup> Segran, E. (2017). "Fenty Beauty: Redefining beauty industry standards. *Fast Company*."

<sup>41</sup> Dholakia, R. R., & Acciardo, L. A. (2020). "Kylie Cosmetics: A social media phenomenon." *Journal of Business Research*.

### 1.3 Definition of Mission and Vision Statements

Mission and vision statements are primary components within an organization's strategic structure, serving as articulations of a brand's core purpose and its aspirations for the future. These statements play a critical role in guiding an organization's strategic direction and influencing its positioning inside the market<sup>42</sup>.

A mission statement defines the immediate objectives of a brand and its commitment to delivering specific consumer benefits<sup>43</sup>. It typically describes what the company does, who it serves, and how it delivers value to its stakeholders. Mission statements are concise, clear, and action-oriented, providing a practical guide for everyday tasks and direction. On the other hand, vision statements articulate the brand's long-term goals and desired impact on the industry or society. Vision statements are usually more aspirational and forward-looking, inspiring employees and stakeholders with a compelling image of what the organization strives to become or accomplish. While mission statements focus on the present and near future, vision statements look further ahead, sometimes spanning decades.

According to Daniel S. Cochran a mission statement is a "declaration of an organization's reason for being," crucial for establishing objectives, formulating strategies, and motivating employees<sup>44</sup>. This enduring statement of purpose distinguishes one business from others and is vital for effective strategic management.

Similarly, in Shelley A. Kirkpatrick's work on vision statement development, vision statements are described as a leader's expression of a desired long-term future state for an organization<sup>45</sup>. They provide essential context to employees about the purpose of their work and the direction of the organization. Kirkpatrick highlights the transformative impact of vision statements on organizational, team, and individual performance, emphasizing that their effectiveness hinges on specific characteristics such as clarity, challenge, and alignment with organizational objectives.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> David, F. R., & David, F. R. (2017). *Strategic management: Concepts and cases* (16th ed.). Pearson.

<sup>43</sup> Definition of Mission Statement by the Corporate Finance Institute  
<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/mission-statement/>

<sup>44</sup> Cochran, D. S., David, F. R., & Gibson, C. K. (1970). "A framework for developing an effective mission statement." In *Journal of Business Strategies*.

<sup>45</sup> Kirkpatrick, S. A. (2008). "How to build a better vision statement". *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*.

<sup>46</sup> Id

Both mission and vision statements, therefore, are not just strategic tools but are necessary for shaping the cultural and operational ethos of an organization, guiding decision-making, and aligning the company's values with its strategic goals.<sup>47</sup> Together, these statements structure a strong duo that guides strategic planning, aligns organizational efforts, and communicates core values to both internal and external audiences. Effective mission and vision statements are memorable, distinctive, and reflective of the organization's culture and values. They act as a north star for employees, helping to foster a sense of purpose and unity, while also differentiating the organization from competitors and attracting like-minded customers, partners, and talent.

### 1.3.1 Mission and Vision Statements in Celebrity Branding

Mission and vision statements assume an essential part in characterizing the strategic direction and cultural ethos of a brand, and this is particularly evident in celebrity-owned brands. These statements are often deeply intertwined with the personal values and public personas of the celebrities themselves, creating brands that are both authentic and emotionally resonant with consumers<sup>48</sup>. For example, Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty brand promotes self-acceptance and mental health awareness, reflecting her own advocacy in these areas<sup>49</sup>. Similarly, Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle brand, Goop, emphasizes holistic wellness and alternative health practices, aligning with her personal beliefs and public advocacy.<sup>50</sup>

In the case of celebrity-owned brands, mission statements often detail the brand's current activities and aims, focusing on what the brand does, who it serves, and how it sets itself apart in the marketplace. These statements can highlight themes such as personal empowerment, innovation, or community impact, which are frequently aspects of the celebrity's public identity.

On the other hand, vision statements from celebrity brands often attempt to inspire, innovate, or lead cultural shifts, mirroring the celebrity's own goals for societal influence.

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<sup>47</sup> Northouse, P. G. (2019). "Leadership: Theory and practice (8th ed.)." Sage Publications.

<sup>48</sup> Moulard, J. G., Garrity, C. P., & Rice, D. H. (2015). "What makes a human brand authentic? Identifying the antecedents of celebrity authenticity." *Psychology & Marketing*.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, K. (2020). "The mission and vision of Rare Beauty: Promoting self-acceptance." *Vogue*.

<sup>50</sup> Vazquez, A., & Xu, Y. (2019). "Goop: The rise of a celebrity-driven lifestyle brand." *Journal of Consumer Culture*.

In both cases, the integration of a celebrity's personal values into the brand's mission and vision statements not only enhances the authenticity of the brand but also encourages a stronger connection with the audience. This strategic alignment helps in shaping a brand identity that is both influential and inspirational, resonating deeply with consumers who share or aspire to those values.

## Chapter Two: Case Study of Rare Beauty

### 2.1 Introduction to Rare Beauty

In 2019, Selena Gomez embarked on a journey to build her own fully independent brand.<sup>51</sup> She wanted to set Rare Beauty apart from other celebrity-owned brands often relying on incubators<sup>52</sup>, such as Kendo for Fenty Beauty by Rhianna, or Forma Brands for R.E.M Beauty by Ariana Grande. She assembled a sharp team to launch a small to middle-market-sized company. She started by appointing Scott Friedman as the CEO, bringing on board professionals from various successful enterprises. Rare Beauty was launched in September 2020, exclusively through its official website and in Sephora stores in North America. The name “Rare” symbolizes the commitment to supporting everyone's natural beauty and the distinctiveness that each person brings, reinforcing the idea that everyone is rare and valuable just as they are. It was also the title of Selena’s third single album, which she released in January 2020. The album and the brand share a common theme of embracing and celebrating the unique aspects of oneself.

Rare Beauty is a makeup brand with the aspiration to redefine beauty standards and encourage self-acceptance. It has quickly established itself in the competitive beauty industry through its inclusive approach and commitment to mental health advocacy.

This cosmetics company was created with the mission to challenge unrealistic beauty standards deeply institute in the fabric of the cosmetics industry. Rare Beauty is different from other beauty brands because it focuses on products that highlight one's natural beauty and because it encourages users to embrace their own uniqueness. The products are designed to be user-friendly, catering to everyday people who seek simplicity in their beauty routines. Moreover, Rare Beauty has committed to making a social impact through its Rare Impact Fund, promising to raise \$100 million over the next ten years to support mental health services and education. This initiative aligns perfectly with Gomez's own public struggles with mental health, intensifying the authenticity of the brand's mission. The company emphasizes accessibility and inclusivity, offering a wide range of shades and products suitable for all types of skin, and

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<sup>51</sup> Fakih, S. (2023). “Rare beauty and its rare success.”

<sup>52</sup> In the business world, incubators are organizations or programs designed to help startups or new companies grow by providing resources such as funding, mentorship, office space, and networking opportunities. They typically assist early-stage companies in developing business models, refining their products, and scaling operations.



promoting a message that everyone is beautiful just as they are. This philosophy is not only reflected in its product line but also in its marketing strategies and community engagement efforts, which focus on building a supportive and inclusive community around the brand.

### 2.1.1 Brand Founder: Selena Gomez

Selena Gomez, born on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1992, is an American singer, actress, producer, and businesswoman. She started her career as a child actress<sup>53</sup>, and has established herself as a multifaceted talent in the entertainment industry, ultimately becoming a successful pop singer<sup>54</sup> and actress. At the age of 32, she is now one of the youngest female self-made billionaires, with most of her wealth coming from her successful Rare Beauty brand.<sup>55</sup>

In 2015, Gomez revealed that she had been diagnosed with lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease that led to her undergoing a kidney transplant in 2017. Throughout her career, Gomez has been open about her struggles with mental health, including depression and anxiety. In 2014, she reportedly entered rehab for these issues. In 2022, she released a documentary titled “Selena Gomez: My Mind and Me”, in which she openly discusses her mental health struggles and the challenges of coping with fame. The documentary offers an intimate look into the complexities of her life over a six-year period<sup>56</sup>. This deeply personal film narrates her battles with mental health, the pressures of fame, and her growth both personally and professionally. It provides fans and viewers a glimpse into the challenges she has faced behind the scenes, highlighting her strength and journey towards healing. The documentary doesn’t show her forgetting her past as much as confronting it.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Starring on the children’s television series *Barney & Friends* (2002-2004), and rose to prominence as a teen idol, leading as Alex Russo on the Disney Channel sitcom *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012).

<sup>54</sup> Selena Gomez signed with Hollywood Records in 2008 and formed the pop rock band Selena Gomez & the Scene. Seeking greater independence, she signed with Interscope Records in 2014. Under Interscope, she released her critically acclaimed albums “Revival” in 2015 and “Rare” in 2020, both marking significant milestones in her artistic development and commercial success.

<sup>55</sup> Bloomberg News, (2024), “Selena Gomez is a billionaire thanks to her beauty brand.”

<sup>56</sup> Just minutes into the series, we see Gomez cancelling her 2016 *Revival* tour early in order to tearfully check-in to a treatment facility, as well scenes in which she is, unable to get out of bed, scenes of her lashing out at friends, scenes of her roaming her house aimlessly and scenes of her coming apart in the middle of a press tour.

<sup>57</sup> Azzopardi, C. (2022). “‘Selena Gomez: My Mind and Me’ Review: An Honest Portrait of Stardom.” *The New York Times*.

In 2020, Gomez founded Rare Beauty, a cosmetics company that aligns with her advocacy towards mental health awareness. The company, valued at \$2 billion in 2024, is complemented by the Rare Impact Fund, a non-profit organization dedicated to mental health support.

Gomez's involvement with Rare Beauty extends beyond being a mere figure. She actively participates in the brand's development, from product innovation to marketing strategies, making sure that the brand's offerings and messaging remain true to its core values. Her personal story and advocacy work are intertwined into the fabric of Rare Beauty, making it a deeply personal and impactful project.

### 2.1.2 History of the Firm

Selena Gomez, known for her multifaceted talents in acting and singing, ventured into the beauty industry by founding Rare Beauty, which launched in September 2020. The idea of creating Rare Beauty predated the pandemic, marking a significant chapter in Gomez's career as she desired to innovate within the cosmetics sector.

The birth of Rare Beauty traces back to Selena Gomez's personal experiences and her desire to create a brand that emphasizes individuality and self-love. Gomez, who has been in the public eye from a young age, witnessed firsthand the pressures of conforming to societal beauty standards. This is what inspired her to develop a brand different from others, that celebrates imperfections and promotes authenticity.

Selena's true intent behind the brand was to emphasize her desire to collaborate with experienced individuals who were ready to embrace the journey with her. She built a formidable team led by CEO Scott Friedman, alongside Chief Digital Officer Mehdi and Chief Product Development Officer Joyce Kim, all of whom previously contributed their expertise at NYX Cosmetics.<sup>58</sup> Under their leadership, the team investigated what made Gomez resonate so deeply with her audience. The essence of the brand was in fact inspired by Gomez's personal style, seen in her music videos, fashion choices, and makeup looks, as well as her genuine vulnerability which fans could relate to<sup>59</sup>. Rare Beauty stood out by prioritizing storytelling and producing a type of content that showcased Gomez not just as a celebrity, but as the creator and

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<sup>58</sup> Chikhoun, R. (2024). "How Selena Gomez Made Rare Beauty the Success It Is Today, A Timeline". Women's Wear Daily.

<sup>59</sup> Id

true face of the brand. With Gomez being one of the most followed personalities on the internet, the brand had a vast audience from the start.

Rare Beauty's mission goes beyond just aesthetics, having a strong focus on mental health advocacy, a cause close to Gomez's heart. After revealing her own struggles with lupus, anxiety, depression, and a bipolar diagnosis, Gomez committed to use her platform to challenge the unrealistic pressures and narratives imposed by fame. She realized the importance of addressing her mental health journey openly and reclaiming her story. This ethos is evident in Rare Beauty's commitment to authenticity and self-acceptance, moving away from traditional makeup norms like heavy contouring to embrace natural beauty.

Moreover, Rare Beauty is dedicated to making a societal impact, with 1 percent of all sales directed to the Rare Impact Fund. Through Rare Beauty, Selena Gomez has not only entered the beauty industry but has also redefined it, placing mental health and genuine self-expression as the main missions of the brand.

## 2.2 Rare Beauty's Value Proposition: What Makes Rare Beauty Different?

The beauty standards prevalent in today's society put tremendous pressure on teenagers and young adults, who, as a result, often struggle with self-esteem and body image issues. These standards, brought by media, advertising, and increasingly by social media platforms, typically promote an idealized, often unattainable image of beauty that can lead to significant psychological distress among the youth<sup>60</sup>. Many young people feel obligated to comply with these ideals, experiencing anxiety, depression, and even engaging in harmful behaviors like disordered eating to try and shape themselves into these narrow definitions of beauty.

Rare Beauty addresses these challenges directly through its commitment to changing the conversation around beauty standards. Rare Beauty's goal is to eliminate the negative impacts societal pressures have on mental health, by promoting inclusivity and by celebrating natural, individual beauty<sup>61</sup>. The brand's approach is particularly impactful in today's climate where mental health issues are on the rise among young people, aggravated by the isolation and stress

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<sup>60</sup> Tomaino, T. (2023). "Inclusivity in beauty: Rare Beauty". BUF 4700 Contemporary Issues in Fashion.

<sup>61</sup> Id

of the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics reveal an alarming increase in mental health disorders among this demographic, with significant rises in reported cases of anxiety and depression linked to image and self-worth.<sup>62</sup>

The brand's commitment extends beyond its product offerings. Rare Beauty is proactive in addressing mental health issues, a subject deeply important to Gomez, who has publicly shared her own struggles with mental health. This personal connection and advocacy are infused into the brand's mission and vision, making it a genuine voice in the conversation about mental wellness in the beauty industry.

Rare Beauty's strategy involves using minimalistic and lightweight makeup products to accentuate rather than mask a person's natural features, which has been a hit among consumers looking for authenticity and simplicity in their beauty routines. This focus on natural beauty, coupled with a strong stand on mental health, distinguishes Rare Beauty in a market often criticized for unrealistic beauty standards and superficial values. The brand's success demonstrates a shifting consumer preference towards brands that are not only involved in beauty but are also actively participating in larger social conversations and making a tangible impact on the community.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.2.1 Rare Impact Fund

A central pillar of Rare Beauty's value proposition is its Rare Impact Fund, a dedicated initiative whose goal is to increase mental health services and education. This fund was established to foster greater access to mental health resources, particularly for underserved communities, and it seeks to raise \$100 million over the next decade. By allocating one percent of all sales towards this fund, Rare Beauty integrates social responsibility directly into its revenue stream, thus committing to long-term mental health advocacy.

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<sup>62</sup> Carlson, Jane. (2021). "How Beauty Brands are Responding to Mental Health Struggles Exacerbated by the Pandemic and Ongoing Racial Inequalities." Beauty Independent.

<sup>63</sup> Marsh, Natasha. (2021). "What Gen Z Consumers Really Think About Celebrity Beauty Brands." Beauty Independent.

The Rare Impact Fund is part of a broader effort by Rare Beauty to combat the stigma associated with mental health. Initiatives like the Mental Health 101<sup>64</sup> campaign advocate for mental health education and empower communities, particularly within educational settings, to support mental wellness. Through partnerships with organizations such as the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) and the National Council for Behavioral Health, Rare Beauty extends its impact, providing over 2 million dollars in educational resources to improve community mental health support.

The Rare Impact Fund not only amplifies Rare Beauty's commitment to mental wellness but also significantly boosts the brand's appeal and credibility. Consumers increasingly search for brands that contribute positively to societal well-being, and the fund provides a compelling reason to support Rare Beauty over other brands, including those celebrity owned. This initiative extends Rare Beauty's influence beyond cosmetic products by addressing the urgent need for accessible mental health services, thereby resonating deeply with consumers who value purchases driven by a clear purpose. By leveraging its platform to promote inclusivity and self-acceptance, Rare Beauty not only stands out in the beauty industry but also sets a precedent for how brands can influence broader social change<sup>65</sup>. This approach shows how Rare Beauty uses its influence to foster a more inclusive and mentally healthy society, making it a leader in blending beauty through social advocacy.

### 2.3 Rare Beauty's Mission and Vision: Breaking and Redefining Beauty Standards

Rare Beauty differentiates itself in the beauty industry by proposing an innovative mission: *"We are on a mission to help everyone celebrate their individuality by redefining what beautiful means. We want to promote self-acceptance and give people the tools they need to feel less alone in the world."*<sup>66</sup>

The brand is unique also due to its vision. Their statement extends beyond selling makeup; it aspires to change the conversation around beauty and mental health. *"Our vision is to create a safe, welcoming space in beauty—and beyond—that supports mental well-being across age,*

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<sup>64</sup> Aziz, A. (2021). "Rare Beauty launches mental health 101 campaign to help Gen-Z get access to health for all." Forbes.

<sup>65</sup> See supra note 60

<sup>66</sup> Cohen, Elyse. (2022). "Rare Beauty Social Impact Report." Rare Beauty.

*gender identity, sexual orientation, race, cultural background, physical or mental ability, and perspective.”*<sup>67</sup>

Unlike many makeup brands, Rare Beauty was created with a distinct goal, not merely to produce an overall good product. In an era where consumers are becoming more diverse and where around one billion people globally are affected by mental health issues, the beauty market was lacking such a brand that focused on advocating positive self-image, inclusivity, and mental health awareness, particularly among younger audiences. The brand's commitment is manifested through its product line, which includes an expansive range of shades and tools designed to enhance natural beauty without masking individual features. And more than just hanging a mission and vision statement on the webpage, both Rare Beauty and Selena are making a promise to truly deliver something to their customers: a safe space in an industry that is characterized by unrealistic beauty expectations<sup>68</sup>. They are doing so by offering a good quality product, great customer engagement, community building, consistent messaging, a Rare Impact Fund, and more.

Rare Beauty aims to break down unrealistic standards of perfection and redefine beauty as something that is diverse, inclusive, and accessible to all. By promoting self-acceptance and advocating for mental health, Rare Beauty seeks to create a broader cultural shift towards more compassionate and realistic beauty ideals. This distinctive approach not only challenges existing beauty norms but also creates a space for meaningful dialogue and change, setting a new standard for what beauty brands can aspire to achieve.

## 2.4 Strategic Insights from Rare Beauty’s Branding Approach

Consumers today are surrounded by products and brand endorsements, with every celebrity and influencer launching or selling something, often simultaneously. In the beauty and skincare industry, this trend is particularly pronounced, with numerous celebrities launching their own lines. However, not all celebrity brands manage to sustain their initial success. Recent reports by Bloomberg<sup>69</sup>, Vogue Business<sup>70</sup>, and Business of Fashion have highlighted a growing

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<sup>67</sup> Id

<sup>68</sup> See supra note 52

<sup>69</sup> Bloomberg News. (2023). “The golden era of Celebrity beauty brands is ending”.

<sup>70</sup> Chitrakorn, K., (2023), “Beauty’s newest backers? Celebrities”. Vogue Business

number of celebrity brand failures, illustrating the challenges of maintaining relevance and profitability in a saturated market. As the industry evolves, only brands that truly resonate with consumers on a deeper level tend to succeed.

Rare Beauty distinguishes itself in this competitive landscape. Unlike many celebrity brands that merely follow trends, Rare Beauty is built around a core mission of promoting self-acceptance and mental health awareness, values that, nowadays, are important especially for young people. The brand's success is not just measured by sales but also by customer engagement and critical recognition, suggesting that consumers are not just buying products but buying into a movement.

Rare Beauty's branding strategy provides invaluable insights for both emerging and established brands, focusing on several key areas. There are mainly four different characteristics that shape the core of the brand, which are authenticity, inclusivity, social responsibility and brand messaging. Selena Gomez's deep, authentic engagement with Rare Beauty enhances its credibility, attracting consumers who value sincerity. This authenticity creates trust and loyalty between the brand and its customers. Additionally, one of the brand's biggest approaches is its use of positive psychology to resonate with its audience. From product names to social media messages, they encourage self-acceptance and a positive self-image. In essence, customers are attracted by Rare Beauty because they perceive a unique value proposition stemming from the brand's genuine commitment to its missions and exceptional coherence between their promises and delivering to its customers' expectations. Moreover, Rare Beauty's inclusivity is another fundamental quality of the company. The brand meets the increasing demand for diversity within the beauty industry by offering an inclusive product range, and by creating campaigns starring ordinary people instead of supermodels. This inclusivity extends to their TikTok strategy as well, where the brand posts relatable, genuine content that aligns with the platform's authenticity-centric culture, thereby expanding its appeal and fostering community. In addition, the Rare Impact Fund illustrates Rare Beauty's commitment to social responsibility, differentiating it from other brands and appealing to consumers who prioritize support for meaningful causes. Lastly, the company's consistent emphasis on self-acceptance and mental wellness reinforces its brand identity and values. This coherence in messaging ensures that every interaction with the consumer reflects the brand's core ethos, strengthening brand recognition and loyalty.

These strategies demonstrate how brands can leverage authenticity, inclusivity, and social responsibility to establish a strong connection with today's consumers, potentially serving as a model for other companies aiming to make a significant impact in their industries.



## Chapter Three: A Comparative Analysis of Celebrity Brands

### 3.1 Comparison of Rare Beauty with Other Celebrity Brands

The rise of the cosmetic industry has led many celebrities to jump on the opportunity to create a makeup line or brand of their own,<sup>71</sup> yet many struggle to sustain in the long run or are perceived to have succeeded even without the presence of a celebrity as the brand owner. Only a few stand out as influential players, with Rare Beauty being one of the most prominent. Rare Beauty has differentiated itself through its unique value proposition and its mission and vision statements that commit to inclusivity and mental health advocacy. The following chapter aims to provide a comparative analysis of Rare Beauty against other successful celebrity brands, such as Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, Rhode Beauty by Hailey Bieber, and Chiara Ferragni's brand, highlighting their strategies and market positioning. The main goal of this research is to understand how many of these celebrity-owned brands would stand out and succeed, even without the presence of their celebrity owner.

#### 3.1.1 Rare Beauty vs. Fenty Beauty by Rihanna

Fenty Beauty was launched by the singer Rihanna<sup>72</sup> in 2017 during New York fashion week. The brand revolutionized the beauty industry with its unique inclusive approach to makeup, offering a vast range of 40 foundation shades to include all skin tones<sup>73</sup>. It focuses on diversity, quality, and accessibility, with its products available globally through Sephora and other retailers. Fenty Beauty's commitment to inclusivity has reshaped beauty standards, inspiring other beauty companies, such as Rare Beauty, to prioritize inclusivity in shade ranges and representation. Its success has made it a market leader among celebrity brands, earning a loyal customer base and numerous recognitions.

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<sup>71</sup> Saravanan, A., & Adnan, W. H., (2018), "A study on celebrity cosmetic brand content analysis and social media engagement: In the case of Fenty Beauty's product." *Journal of Media Studies Malaysia*.

<sup>72</sup> Rihanna, born Robyn Rihanna Fenty on February 20, 1988, in Saint Michael, Barbados, is a famous singer, actress, and businesswoman. She emerged on the music scene in 2005 with her debut album, "Music of the Sun". Aside from music, Rihanna has made substantial impacts in fashion and beauty, launching her brands Fenty Beauty in 2017 and Fenty Skin in 2020, both praised for their inclusivity. Her luxury fashion house under LVMH, named Fenty, launched in 2019, making her the first woman to create an original brand at LVMH and the first woman of color to lead an LVMH Maison.

<sup>73</sup> See supra note 71

The brand's core value proposition is centered around providing high-quality makeup for all skin tones, with a special focus on offering a wide range of shades for those who have historically struggled to find their match in other popular beauty lines. The celebrity brand has been created with the aim of catering to all skin tones as well as undertones, offering each shade in cool and warm versions.<sup>74</sup> This approach was highlighted during the initial launch with an unprecedented offering of 40 foundation shades, a selection that has since expanded to 50. The beauty line is not just for women of colour, it is targeted also for albino women who struggle with lighter foundation shades.<sup>75</sup>

Fenty Beauty's mission is to challenge and redefine traditional beauty standards, pushing the boundaries of the conventional beauty narrative to include all skin tones, types, and genders. The brand aims to create a world where everyone feels seen, represented, and empowered. Its vision statement, "Beauty for All", captures this message, envisioning a global beauty community that reflects the full diversity of humanity. Fenty Beauty's inclusive agenda extends beyond product offerings to impact conversations around beauty, promoting acceptance and appreciation of diversity across the industry. Its vision is supported by continuous innovation and responsiveness to consumer needs, solidifying its status as an innovator in the beauty market. Rihanna's own visibility and vocal advocacy for inclusivity have pushed the brand further, making Fenty Beauty a symbol of change and a guide for progressive values in beauty.

Fenty Beauty represents one of Rare Beauty main competitors. The companies are two modern cosmetics brands that have made significant waves in the beauty industry, each with a unique approach to inclusivity and authenticity. On one hand, there is Fenty Beauty, which broke new ground with its wide range of foundation shades. This focus on inclusivity not only challenged already established industry norms but also set a new standard for beauty brands worldwide. Fenty Beauty's product line is extensive, including a variety of products designed to suit diverse beauty needs, that goes from skincare to makeup. Its mission has been clear from the start: to create an inclusive culture where everyone feels represented.

On the other hand, Rare Beauty emphasizes self-acceptance and the breaking down of unrealistic standards of perfection. While it also offers an impressive range of foundation

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<sup>74</sup> Ismail, A., (2018), "International Marketing Strategies in the Celebrity Cosmetics Industry: A Dual Case Study of Huda Beauty and Fenty Beauty". Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

<sup>75</sup> Id

shades, Rare Beauty's focus extends more to mental health, with a portion of all product proceeds going to the Rare Impact Fund. Rare Beauty promotes the idea of makeup as a tool to enhance one's natural beauty rather than cover it up, which resonates deeply in today's culture that values authenticity and self-expression.

Both brands have been pioneers, each pushing forward the concept of inclusivity and representation in their ways. Fenty Beauty's broad shade range and high-performance products speak to a wide audience, establishing guidelines in the industry, while Rare Beauty's commitment to mental health and natural beauty brings a fresh perspective to the beauty conversation. Each brand has built a strong community around its core values, influencing industry standards and consumer expectations. They emphasize the evolving nature of beauty, highlighting inclusivity not only in terms of skin color but also in embracing individuality and personal well-being.

### 3.1.2 Rare Beauty vs. Rhode by Hailey Bieber

Rhode Skin was founded by Hailey Bieber<sup>76</sup> in 2022. The brand embodies a minimalist approach to skincare, and it promises effective results with a focus on achieving hydrated and luminous skin. This skincare line is designed with simplicity and efficiency at its core, reaching especially those who prefer a simplified skincare routine without compromising on quality. The product range of Rhode Beauty is concise yet powerful, featuring key items such as a peptide glazing fluid, a barrier restore cream, and a nourishing lip treatment. The packaging reflects this vision with its sleek, modern aesthetic, which not only appeals to a contemporary audience but also emphasizes the brand's commitment to accessible luxury. Marketing strategies for Rhode Beauty heavily leverage social media, utilizing Hailey Bieber's extensive following to reach a broad demographic. The brand targets young adults and beauty followers who value both simplicity and efficacy in their skincare choices. Hailey herself, along with other influencers and celebrities, embodies the brand's image, further reinforcing its appeal.

Rhode Skin's value proposition is centered on delivering minimalist skincare solutions that provide maximum results with minimum effort. The brand emphasizes high-quality and

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<sup>76</sup> Hailey Bieber, born Hailey Rhode Baldwin on November 22, 1996, in Tucson, Arizona, is an American model and influencer. She is the daughter of actor Stephen Baldwin and part of the Baldwin family. Known for her stylish presence and fashion-forward choices, she has become a significant influence in the fashion industry. Beyond her modeling endeavors, Hailey has ventured into entrepreneurial activities, most notably launching her own skincare line, Rhode Skin, which emphasizes minimalism and effective skincare.

scientifically backed ingredients that offer core benefits to the skin such as hydration, nourishment, and radiance. With products such as the peptide glazing fluid and barrier restore cream, Rhode Skin promises to deliver the “glazed donut”<sup>77</sup> look: moisturized, healthy, and glowing skin accessible to everyone. The brand combines luxury with accessibility, aiming to provide premium skincare experiences at a more approachable price point. Rhode Skin's mission is to change beauty by offering skincare products that are both effective and inclusive. The brand is committed to simplicity and transparency, ensuring that each product is made with care and without unnecessary additives. The vision of Rhode Skin is to redefine beauty standards by promoting a more natural and effortless approach to skincare. The brand envisions a future where everyone can achieve their best skin without the complication of multi-step routines or the high barrier of premium pricing.

Rhode Skin and Rare Beauty are two distinct entities within the beauty industry, each founded by celebrities who bring their unique vision and missions to their brands. While Rhode Skin focuses on skincare and Rare Beauty on cosmetics, both brands share a commitment to simplicity but approach these ideals in notably different ways. Rhode Skin targets the skincare market with a minimalist philosophy. The brand is designed to deliver simple yet effective skincare solutions, aimed at achieving hydrated, healthy-looking skin, often illustrated by the brand's “glazed donut” look. This focus on essential skincare items such as serums, creams, and lip treatments highlight the brand’s commitment to simple and straightforward skincare routines. Conversely, Rare Beauty explores the cosmetic market, offering a wide spectrum of products that include foundations, concealers, and lip colors. Rare Beauty’s products are made in order to enhance natural beauty and promote self-acceptance, aligning with the brand's mission to challenge the unrealistic standards often set by the beauty industry.

Rhode Skin’s philosophy centers around the transformation of skincare, offering high-quality, effective products that are accessible and simple to use. The brand’s marketing strategies are closely tied to Hailey Bieber’s personal use and endorsement of her products, creating a direct connection with her audience.<sup>78</sup> In contrast, Rare Beauty extends its mission beyond selling beauty products to embrace mental health advocacy, an integral part of its brand identity. Through the Rare Impact Fund, Rare Beauty not only contributes financially to mental health

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<sup>77</sup> A term used by Hailey Bieber herself when talking about her complexion. This means dewy, moisturized, glowy skin with the shine and shimmer of a glazed donut.

<sup>78</sup> Sienkiewicz, L., (2024), “Star Power versus Influencer Charm – Investigating Authenticity in Celebrity-Owned Beauty Products”. University of Twente.

causes but also fosters a community that supports open discussions on mental well-being. Another difference it's in the companies' marketing approach. On one hand, Rhode Skin leverages a straightforward approach, primarily utilizing Hailey Bieber's social media influence. The authenticity and personal connection Hailey shares with her audience enhance the brand's appeal, making it relatable and trustworthy<sup>79</sup>. Rare Beauty, on the other hand, actively builds a community around its values of self-acceptance and mental health awareness. The brand encourages its users to share their personal stories and how Rare Beauty products enhance not just their appearance but their confidence and self-perception. While Rhode Skin has been effective in attracting consumers who seek reliability and simplicity in their skincare regimen, Rare Beauty has significantly impacted the beauty industry by integrating mental health into its brand narrative.

### 3.1.3 Rare Beauty vs. Chiara Ferragni Brand by Chiara Ferragni

Chiara Ferragni<sup>80</sup>, an Italian entrepreneur and fashion influencer, established her fashion brand in 2013, building on her fame from her popular blog, "The Blonde Salad". The blog was launched while she was still a law student, and it was originally intended as a platform to share her personal style and insights on fashion. However, it quickly gathered a massive following, establishing Ferragni as a notable figure in the fashion industry. The decision to create her own brand was driven by her desire to translate her online influence into a tangible product line that reflected her personal aesthetics and the playful, chic spirit she was known for.

The company initially focused on producing footwear, distinguished by glittery, eye-catching designs, including her now-iconic "Flirting" logo, which features winking eyes and glitter details. Over the years, the Chiara Ferragni brand has expanded significantly, venturing into a broader range of apparel and accessories. Continuing her brand's evolution, Ferragni entered the beauty industry, launching a makeup line that aligns with the youthful and vibrant essence of her existing fashion line. This expansion not only marks a significant milestone for Chiara

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<sup>79</sup> See supra note 79

<sup>80</sup> Chiara Ferragni is an Italian fashion influencer, entrepreneur, and designer, known for founding the highly successful fashion blog "The Blonde Salad" in 2009. Born on May 7, 1987, in Cremona, Italy, she reshaped her online fame into a multifaceted career in the fashion industry, launching her own fashion line, Chiara Ferragni Collection, in 2013. Known for her distinctive style and sharp use of social media, Ferragni has become one of the most influential figures in digital fashion marketing, transforming her personal brand into a global fashion and lifestyle empire.

Ferragni as a brand but also shows how much of a versatile entrepreneur she is, in both the fashion and beauty sectors.

The brand's value proposition lies in its unique blend of luxury and accessibility, mixing high-end fashion elements with a sense of fun that resonates with a young audience. Over the years, it has expanded to include apparel, accessories and makeup, maintaining a consistent theme that reflects Ferragni's own fashion sense.

The mission of the brand is to empower women by offering fashion that promotes self-expression and individuality. By offering products that are both trendy and uniquely designed, the brand encourages consumers to make bold fashion statements while still maintaining a sense of elegance and sophistication. This mission reflects Ferragni's personal journey as a fashion influencer and entrepreneur, who has consistently advocated for women to express themselves freely through their style choices. The vision of the brand is to establish a global fashion label that not only stands out for its distinctive designs but also for its ability to inspire and engage its community. Ferragni aims to create more than just a clothing line; she seeks to build a movement that encourages creativity and boldness among its followers. The brand aims to continually innovate and expand its reach, influencing fashion trends and promoting a lifestyle that celebrates creativity and self-expression.

Chiara Ferragni's brand and Rare Beauty represent two modern takes on how celebrity-founded companies can influence the fashion and beauty industries. However, they embody quite different approaches to authenticity, inclusivity, and social responsibility. Firstly, looking at the Ferragni's brand we can see how much the brand's growth has been through her strategic use of digital platforms. In fact, by leveraging her substantial social media following, she has created a direct line of communication with her audience, offering them a mix of personal insight and brand content that has effectively blurred the lines between the influencer and the enterprise<sup>81</sup>. This approach has not only elevated brand visibility but also cultivated a deep sense of loyalty and engagement among her fans. However, as we have analyzed in the previous chapters this could be both an advantage and a disadvantage. An example of the downsides of having a celebrity so deeply attached to the brand is represented by the "Pandoro-Gate"

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<sup>81</sup> Forbes, K., (2016), "Examining the beauty industry's use of social influencers". *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*.

scandal.<sup>82</sup> This incident led to a substantial loss of followers and credibility for Ferragni, as she was perceived to have exploited her influence for personal gain under the appearance of charity. The scandal has raised broader questions about the ethical responsibilities of influencers and the transparency required in their promotional activities. The case also led to several repercussions on Chiara Ferragni's work life. An example is the Safilo eyewear brand, which decided to end its collaboration with the digital influencer and entrepreneur for “violation of the company's ethical principles.”

While her brand is undeniably successful, the "Pandoro-Gate" scandal raised questions about the authenticity of the brand's philanthropic messaging, potentially eroding trust among her followers. Rare Beauty, on the other hand, was launched with a clear ethos of self-acceptance and mental health advocacy. Selena Gomez has been transparent about her struggles, which lends a genuine authenticity to the brand's mission. Rare Beauty's initiatives, like the Rare Impact Fund, further prove its commitment to supporting mental health causes, enhancing its authenticity in the eyes of consumers.

Moreover, while Chiara Ferragni's fashion line is trendy and reflects her personal style, there is less emphasis on inclusivity in terms of product range or marketing compared to some other celebrity brands. The brand primarily targets fans of high-end fashion and tends to focus on a specific segment of the fashion market. Inclusivity is the base of Rare Beauty, which is evident in its product offerings. The brand launched with an impressive range of foundation shades suitable for many skin tones, a deliberate move to ensure that everyone could find their match. This commitment to inclusivity is integral to the brand's identity and marketing efforts. The Chiara Ferragni brand's social responsibility was called into question during the “Pandoro-Gate” scandal, where it failed to transparently communicate about charitable contributions. While Chiara Ferragni has engaged in charitable activities, the incident suggests that there might be room for more consistent and transparent social responsibility practices. Social responsibility is woven into the fabric of Rare Beauty, which has committed to donating a portion of all sales, not just profits, to the Rare Impact Fund, aiming to raise \$100 million over

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<sup>82</sup> The 2022 campaign was marketed with the promise that part of the proceeds from the sales of Balocco pandoro cakes, branded with Ferragni's logo, would benefit a children's hospital in Turin. However, it was later revealed that Balocco had only made a one-time donation prior to the campaign's launch, and no additional contributions were made from the sales as suggested. The Italian antitrust authority fined Ferragni €1 million and Balocco €420,000 for misleading consumers about the charitable nature of the product sales. Ferragni responded to the controversy by apologizing for the misleading communications and pledged to donate €1 million to the hospital to rectify the situation, while also stating that she would no longer tie charitable causes directly to commercial activities to avoid such issues in the future.

the next ten years for mental health services. This clear, ongoing commitment to a social cause stands out as a major component of the brand's identity.

In other words, while both brands leverage the substantial influence of their founders, Rare Beauty stands out for its commitment to inclusivity and social responsibility, aligning closely with broader social movements and discussions. Chiara Ferragni's brand, while successful and reflective of her personal style, faces challenges in rebuilding trust and aligning its social impact initiatives with its public persona.

### 3.2 Results and Findings

The cosmetic industry has indeed seen many celebrities create their own brands, each offering unique values in an attempt to succeed in a crowded market. Among these, Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez stands out for its strong commitment to inclusivity and mental health advocacy. This approach not only has differentiated the company from many of its competitors but has also aligned the brand closely with current societal values, enhancing its appeal and sustainability in the market. Another analyzed successful brand is Fenty Beauty, which is better known for having revolutionized the beauty industry by launching with 40 shades of foundation, reaching to an underserved diverse audience. The company has had a profound impact on industry standards, pushing other brands to expand their shade ranges and approach to marketing. A different case is represented by Rhode, that focuses on skincare, promoting a minimalist approach with a smaller range of products that emphasize quality and efficacy. While not as expansive in its product diversity as Fenty or Rare Beauty, Rhode aims to appeal to consumers looking for effective, straightforward skincare routines. Lastly, Chiara Ferragni's brand extends from her personal fashion blog to a broader lifestyle brand that includes apparel, accessories and makeup. The brand has faced challenges, particularly with the "Pandoro-Gate" scandal, impacting its reputation and possibly affecting long-term sustainability.

The comparative analysis of Rare Beauty, Fenty Beauty, Rhode Skin, and the Chiara Ferragni's Brand reveals several key insights into the strategies and market positions of successful celebrity brands. First and foremost, the fundamental role of authenticity and personal connection is evident. Brands that genuinely reflect the personal values and experiences of their founders, such as Rare Beauty and Fenty Beauty, resonate deeply with consumers. Authenticity



fosters trust and loyalty, creating a more engaged customer base.<sup>83</sup> Additionally, inclusivity has appeared as a critical success factor for modern brands. Fenty Beauty's pioneering approach to shade diversity and Rare Beauty's efforts to do the same highlight the importance of catering to a broad and diverse audience. Integrating social responsibility into the brand's mission is also fundamental, since it enhances its appeal to socially conscious consumers. Rare Beauty's Rare Impact Fund is a prime example of how brands can make a tangible impact on societal issues. Moreover, leveraging the founder's influence and personal brand can significantly boost a brand's visibility and credibility. This strategy is effectively employed by all the compared brands, utilizing their founders' fame and social media presence to reach a wider audience. Lastly, consistency in messaging, aligned with the brand's core values, ensures a strong, recognizable brand identity. Rare Beauty is the perfect example of coherence between its mission statement and actions. Its focus on mental wellness and self-acceptance is consistently reflected in all its communications, reinforcing its brand ethos. On the other hand, Chiara Ferragni's Brand represents all the repercussions that may occur when this coherence is lacking.

### 3.2.1 Strategic reflections

The main question is whether these brands could succeed without their celebrity founders. While the initial launch of these brands undoubtedly benefits from celebrity endorsement, the long-term success seems more reliant on product quality, brand values, and the ability to adapt to market demands<sup>84</sup>. Rare Beauty's focus on mental health advocacy and community-building creates a loyal customer base that may sustain it independently of Selena Gomez's celebrity status. Fenty Beauty's approach to inclusivity has established the brand deeply into the culture of beauty, potentially giving it continuation even without Rihanna's direct influence. Rhode Beauty and Chiara Ferragni's Brand, on the other hand, might rely more heavily on their founders' ongoing influence and personal branding strategies due to their more focused product lines and narrower market appeals. This analysis indicates that while celebrity can encourage a brand, lasting success in the competitive beauty industry requires innovation, strong values, and responsiveness to consumer needs, which can help these brands stand out and exist beyond the celebrity's direct involvement.

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<sup>83</sup> Bruhn, M., Schoenmüller, V., Schäfer, D. B., & Heinrich, D., (2012), "Brand authenticity: towards a deeper understanding of its conceptualization and measurement." *ACR North American Advances*.

<sup>84</sup> Gupta, M. L. & Verma, S., (2013), "Celebrity endorsement influencing consumer behavior". *International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management*.

Fenty Beauty and Rare Beauty, both owned by powerful celebrities Rihanna and Selena Gomez respectively, have emerged as significant players in the cosmetics industry, each creating a company that combine inclusivity with innovation. Their arrival into the beauty industry has been marked by a similar ethos but with different approaches, setting them apart as close competitors, particularly in a market that succeed thanks to diversity and authenticity. Both brands have not only achieved commercial success but have also created deep connections with consumers. Fenty Beauty's approach to beauty, which emphasizes suitability for all skin types and tones, has cultivated a loyal customer base that resonates with the brand's inclusivity. Similarly, Rare Beauty's emphasis on mental health and self-care speaks to a growing demographic interested in global well-being alongside cosmetics.

An essential aspect of both brands is their potential to exist even in the absence of their celebrity founders. Fenty Beauty and Rare Beauty have ingrained themselves into the fabric of the beauty industry with their core values, not just their celebrity endorsements. Fenty's pioneering work in inclusivity and Rare's focus on mental health are both lasting contributions that created systemic changes in the beauty industry, rather than temporary trends. Both brands are supported by robust business models and strategic market positioning. Their products speak for themselves through quality and innovation, making their appeal not only dependent on their celebrity founders but on the real value they provide to consumers. This ensures their longevity and continued relevance in the beauty industry.

On the other hand, brands such as Rhode Skin focus on emulating the personal beauty and lifestyle of its founder, in this case Hailey Bieber. The brand's advertising and overall messaging suggest a model of aspiration: if consumers wish to mirror the aesthetic or emulate the skincare results of Hailey Bieber, Rhode Skin is the tool to achieve that. This kind of marketing takes advantage of the celebrity influence, where the personal brand and physical attraction of the celebrity are leveraged to promote the product. It's about aspiring to achieve a specific look or lifestyle that the celebrity embodies. However, Rare Beauty focuses on empowering its users to embrace their own uniqueness with products that highlight rather than mask their features. The brand's mission is deeply intertwined with mental health advocacy, promoting confidence and self-acceptance. "If you want to be yourself, and believe in yourself, buy Rare," captures their message perfectly, encouraging consumers to appreciate their natural beauty and personal identity. Conversely, the hidden message in Rhode Skin seems to be, "If you want to be Hailey Bieber, buy Rhode."

This fundamental difference in messaging shows that while Rhode Skin is about achieving a celebrity's style and perhaps tapping into a part of the glamour associated with Hailey Bieber, Rare Beauty is about enhancing and accepting oneself as they are. Rare Beauty's approach is more aligned with current societal movements that prioritize mental health and authentic self-representation over traditional beauty standards. Thus, while both brands promote beauty products, the underlying messages cater to different emotional and psychological consumer needs: aspiration versus empowerment. When a consumer purchases from Rare Beauty, they are investing in a movement that would likely sustain itself even without its celebrity endorsement. Selena is just a plus inside the company. In contrast, when someone buys from Rhode, they are often seeking to mimic an influencer's style, a desire that might not exist if Hailey's name wasn't linked to the brand.

The same narrative applies when analyzing Chiara Ferragni's brand. This company is deeply intertwined with its founder's personal image, primarily selling the aspirational lifestyle of "buy this to be like Chiara." This heavy reliance on the personal brand of Chiara Ferragni suggests that the business might struggle to survive without her active involvement. Furthermore, the brand risks not only dependency issues but also potential failure due to scandals involving its celebrity owner. Such controversies can significantly tarnish the brand's image, potentially leading to long-term sustainability challenges if the public perception continues to associate the brand with negative publicity.<sup>85</sup> In fact, celebrity brands carry the persona and influence of their namesakes into every product or service offered. This means that any significant public event involving the celebrity can directly influence the brand's market performance, customer perception, and overall brand reputation. Chiara Ferragni, a prominent example, has transitioned from a fashion blogger to a leading entrepreneur in fashion and cosmetics. Her brand extends beyond the products, it embodies her lifestyle, opinions, and personal happenings. This amalgamation of personal and brand identity means that the public's perception of Ferragni directly affects their perception of her brand. Any event that affects her can also impact her business ventures. A pertinent example is the Balocco incident involving Chiara Ferragni. As a public figure, Ferragni's endorsement and interactions with other brands are closely watched and can lead to significant public and media reaction. During the Balocco event, Ferragni faced criticism which became a bigger public discussion, encompassing her judgment and the brands associated with her. Following the incident, there was notable

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<sup>85</sup> Newman University, (2024), "Celebrity endorsements: The influence and challenges of famous faces in marketing."

repercussions on social media platforms, where followers expressed their disappointment and skepticism not just about the incident, but also about her authenticity and the genuineness of her brand.<sup>86</sup> This social sentiment negatively impacted her follower count and engagement rates, which are crucial metrics for celebrity brands.

The criticism had a huge effect on her brand's performance. There was a noticeable decrease in sales after the scandal and a negative shift on the brand's image, built significantly on the persona of Ferragni. The core audience, previously aligned closely with Ferragni's presented values and lifestyle, began to show signs of confusion, leading to a period of slowed growth and reduced consumer engagement. In response, the Chiara Ferragni brand took multiple steps to manage the situation and recover its standing among its consumer bases. This included a public apology from Ferragni, a reiteration of her values and the brand's commitment to those values, and strategic charitable initiatives that aimed to restore faith in her personal and brand ethos.

The Balocco case underlines the vulnerability of celebrity brands to incidents involving their names. It highlights the need for robust strategies that can shield the brand from potential backlash arising from celebrity controversies<sup>87</sup>.

While celebrity brands can enjoy rapid growth and strong market presence due to their celebrity association, they are also susceptible to fluctuations in their celebrity's public life. The Chiara Ferragni brand, through the Balocco incident, exemplifies how deeply intertwined a celebrity's actions and public reactions can be with the commercial fate of their entrepreneurial ventures. This case study serves as a lesson for all celebrity brands on the importance of maintaining a positive public image and swiftly addressing any controversies that may arise. It also highlights the importance of coherence between the company's messages, its mission statement and the actions it takes.<sup>88</sup>

As the market for celebrity brands continues to evolve, future success will likely depend on a brand's ability to adapt to changing consumer values and societal trends. Brands that prioritize authenticity, inclusivity, and social responsibility will continue to stand out in the competitive

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<sup>86</sup> Capecchi, A., (2024), "Influencer e crisi reputazionali: Analisi sul campo del caso Chiara Ferragni". Università degli Studi di Pisa.

<sup>87</sup> Zhang, X., Tao, W., & Kim, S., (2018), "A comparative study on global brands' micro blogs between China and USA: Focusing on communication styles and branding strategies." *International Journal of Strategic Communication*.

<sup>88</sup> Id

landscape. Moreover, leveraging digital platforms and social media will remain crucial for engaging with consumers and building strong, loyal communities.

Rare Beauty exemplifies how a celebrity brand can effectively integrate personal values, social responsibility, and inclusive practices to create a meaningful and impactful brand. The strategic insights gained from analyzing Rare Beauty and similar brands offer valuable lessons for both emerging and established brands, underlining the significance of authenticity, inclusivity, and a cohesive brand message. These elements not only resonate with today's consumer but are also crucial for a long-term success of celebrity-owned brands.

## CONCLUSION

The dynamic nature of the fashion and beauty industry is characterized by continuous transformations, a quality that is intensified and enhanced by the influences of celebrities and social media. In this thesis, we have explored the transformative impact of celebrity-owned brands on consumer engagement, highlighting the fundamental roles of authenticity, inclusivity, and social responsibility. The investigation of Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez as a case study provided a vivid illustration of how personal values and social missions can be integrated into business models, resonating deeply with contemporary audiences.

The analysis began with a detailed review of the theoretical concepts of branding, tracing the evolution from simple celebrity endorsements to personal brand management facilitated by social media. This transition emphasizes the shift towards more genuine and engaged celebrity-brand interactions that reflect deeper connections with consumers.

The heart of the study focused on Rare Beauty's strategic initiatives, which center on inclusivity and mental health advocacy. This brand not only challenges traditional beauty standards but also cultivates a community ethos that prioritizes mental wellness and self-acceptance, setting a new guide for the cosmetic industry.

Comparative analysis with other celebrity brands like Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, Rhode by Hailey Bieber, and Chiara Ferragni's brand revealed varied approaches to leveraging celebrity influence. Yet, Rare Beauty stood out for its commitment to authenticity and social causes, which not only attracted a loyal consumer base but also established a lasting impact beyond mere cosmetic appeal. Thanks to the great connection it has forged with its audience, and the significant values it advocates for, Selena Gomez has built a brand that stands strong enough to survive even without her direct involvement. Consumers are drawn to the brand because they are supporting a movement; when purchasing from Rare Beauty, many may not even realize it is associated with Selena, given its distinct name "Rare", which highlights the brand's mission and helps dissociate it from its celebrity founder. In contrast, many other celebrity brands are directly named after their founders. The main example is the Chiara Ferragni's brand, but even Rhode Skin, which uses Hailey Bieber's middle name, and Fenty Beauty, which uses Rhianna's last name. This illustrates that in the highly competitive fashion and beauty markets, the rise and fall of celebrity brands are common, yet those that resonate with authenticity and stand for a greater cause are more likely to survive in such a dynamic environment.

This thesis has explored why the study of celebrity-owned brands, particularly those like Rare Beauty, is so compelling. It represents a converge of market trends, cultural shifts, and the

powerful influence of celebrity, offering rich insights into modern consumer behavior and brand strategy. As the landscape of celebrity branding continues to evolve, the lessons drawn from Rare Beauty's approach will undoubtedly influence future market strategies, emphasizing the importance of genuine connection, social responsibility, and the enduring value of authenticity in the competitive beauty industry.

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